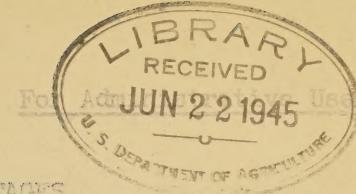


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## TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AND FARM LABOR SHORTAGES

### SUMMARY

The current farm labor situation is intensified by traditional practices which have prevented the full use of the nation's rural manpower.

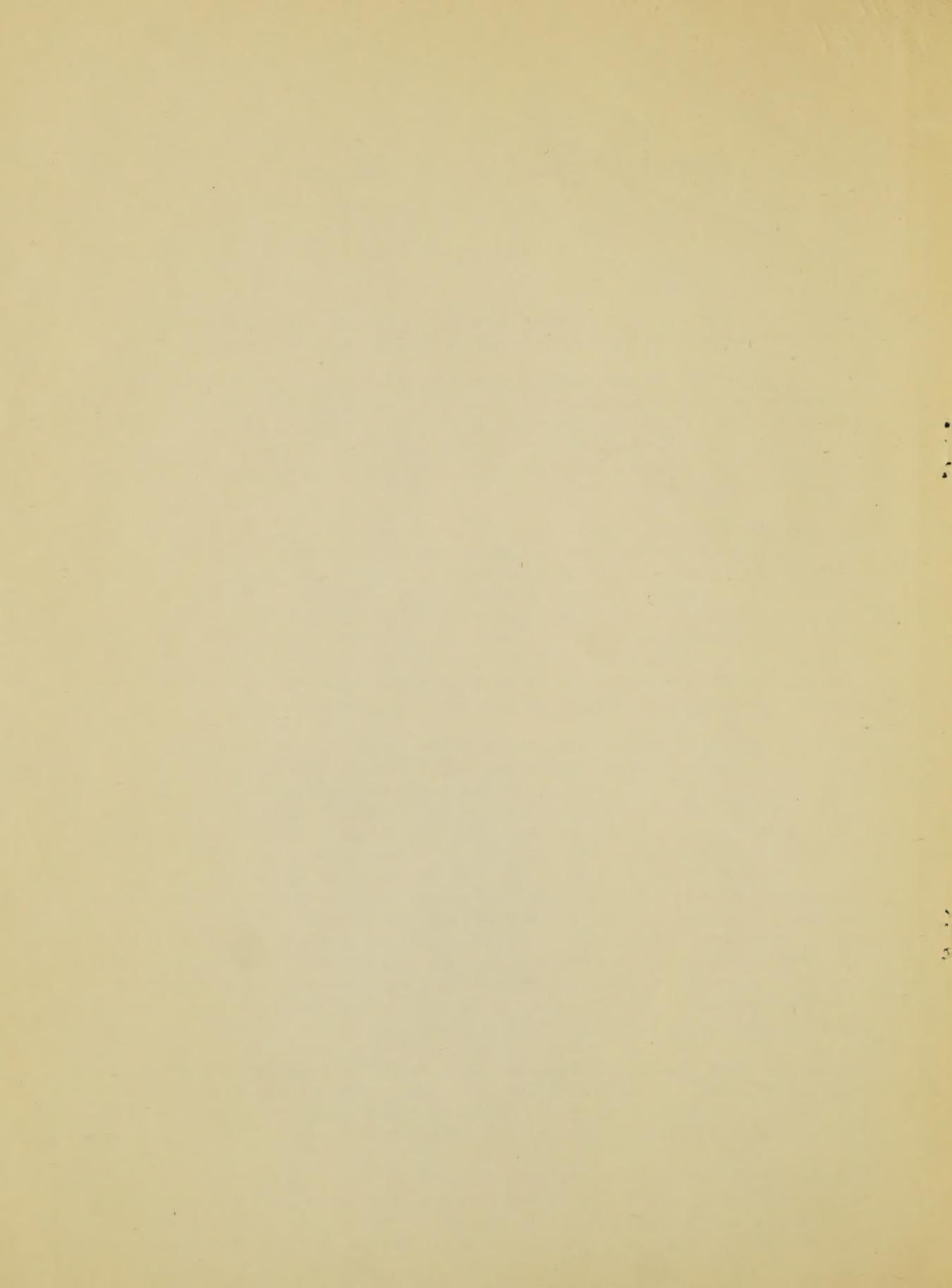
The status of the farm worker is at the heart of the farm labor situation. He has commonly been a member of a surplus and residue labor pool, and has worked as such. When farm workers have been members of submerged ethnic groups - as many of them are - their low economic status has often been accompanied by restrictions upon their movement and upon their full participation in public affairs.

Many of the low status rural dwellers - laborers and dependent operators - have lived in commercial crop areas as seasonal workers or in areas of low physical resources as subsistence farmers, and so have seldom been fully employed. In commercial crop areas where farm workers have had the lowest status, many middle- and upper-income families have been accustomed to doing little actual farm work, in part because labor was plentiful and cheap and also because they felt it beneath their dignity to do work commonly done by low-status farm workers. As a result of these cultural factors, the rural manpower in many parts of the nation has been chronically under-used.

Current wartime pressures are breaking down some of the barriers to the full use of manpower. Many underemployed rural people have moved into urban communities, some have remained on farms and commute to factory work, and a few have gone to other rural areas to do farm work. In response to free transportation, and to assurances about wages and working conditions, a few thousand underemployed rural dwellers in recent months have for the first time gone into other farming areas. Thousands more of these seasonally underemployed rural dwellers can be induced to make themselves available for farm work elsewhere during slack work seasons if their movement is carried out in harmony with the cultural factors of the areas to which they are going and from which they are leaving. Through appropriate loans and supervision, demonstrations and education, agricultural agencies can help additional underemployed farm families who remain on the land increase their productivity through the fuller use of their time.

Members of farm families with "overseer" traditions are beginning to look upon manual work as a patriotic opportunity. Farm women almost everywhere are doing additional farm work. Employed townspeople and urban high school and college students are now helping the farmers in many parts of the country.

The increased use of these various sources of labor on farms can be speeded up by developing local, State, and Federal programs grounded upon an understanding of the cultural factors, region by region, which account for the unequal distribution and traditional under-use of the nation's rural manpower.



The farm labor situation in America is compounded of an actual scarcity of workers in some areas and of traditional practices which block the full use of rural manpower.

Most farm workers stay within definable geographic limits in response to familiar opportunities for employment and their own inability or unwillingness to move. Most employers of farm labor have come to operate with a relatively fixed definition of available labor; in terms of recruiting workers, arriving at the wages to be paid, the housing to be furnished, the work to be done, and, often most important of all, the general behavior between employer and employee. Any loss of workers within the limits of these traditional relationships may be registered by employers as a farm labor shortage.

Where the shortage is not due to an actual scarcity of workers but to the traditionally ineffective use of them, there is need for practices and programs which will release all available workers to full-time employment. With larger production goals for 1943, it is more essential than ever to look behind reports of farm labor shortages to find the real reasons for the reported shortages.

#### I. Under-Used Rural Manpower

A reported farm labor shortage is artificial when farm workers through habit, or in response to poor farm organization, work only a part of the time, and then seldom up to capacity; and when farm employers and their fami-

\* This study is a synthesis by Arthur Raper and F. Howard Forsyth of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. It is based on data provided by the field staff of the Division of Farm Population and other current data, projected against familiar information of the recent past.



lies, townspeople and urban students hesitate to do manual farm work because of the traditional low status of farm workers. In speaking of farm workers we refer to farm laborers who work for daily or monthly wages and share-croppers and other low-income farm operators such as subsistence farmers and dependent tenants.

Behind artificial shortages, where they exist, are the historical and cultural factors out of which the present pattern has grown. Farm workers have been surplus and residue labor, and frequently have worked as such. Farm workers have had low pay and low economic status. Farm workers have been socially and politically handicapped, and have usually accommodated themselves to their situation.

A. Farm Workers Have Been Surplus Labor.

The farm labor pool of the nation has traditionally included all those workers who have not moved off to urban employment. Except for a brief period in the latter part of World War I, and during the last few months, all openings for nonagricultural employment have been taken up shortly after they became available, with always a surplus left in the rural labor reserve. The high rural birth rate, especially among low-income families, has continuously replenished the rural population, and a surplus has accumulated because there have been more rural people than there have been jobs for them in urban and rural areas.

Accustomed to using workers from the rural surplus, the employer of farm labor has expected workers to be ready and waiting from day to day as he may need them. He usually insists upon looking a man over before hiring him. Many a farmer has been unready to acknowledge that the workers have



skills, or to accept workers without skills. The farmer has sought and usually been able to secure "experienced farm hands" who knew how to care for his livestock, mend his fences, till his soil, bleach his celery, save his tobacco, pick his cotton, and other specialized farm tasks where a novice is a clumsy "greenhorn." The butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker have skills which have been generally recognized and paid for; farm workers Tom, Dick and Harry also have skills, but they have usually gone unacknowledged and unrewarded. The principal difference seems to be that there have been so many farm workers.

Into a surplus labor situation such as this came the depression of the 1930's with its work relief programs. Farmers generally were from the first irritated over the fact that the wages paid in these programs were often higher than prevailing farm wages. Later the farmers in many areas learned that they could get the relief agencies to discontinue employment of workers when they were most needed on farms. This left the farm workers in these areas without bargaining power and restored the employers' surplus.

The surplus nature of the farm labor supply helps explain why it has been without a spokesman in the local community or a lobby in the State capitols or in Washington, outside the provisions of the Federal wage and hour legislation, outside effective labor unionism, without economic security or social recognition. The farm worker has been left on the bottom rung of the national economy.

#### B. Farm Workers Have Had Low Pay and Low Economic Status.

Farm wages for the 1942 harvest ranged from below \$1 to \$2 a day for much of the South, up to \$4 to \$6 a day in many parts of the nation. The top wages are double or more what they were a few years back. Monthly



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farm wages show similar variations, but have not risen so rapidly as the day rate. Region by region, the farm workers remain the poorest paid large group of workers in the country.

The great majority of the people who have worked as farm laborers and low-income operators have done so from necessity (or tradition) rather than choice. That is why so many have moved to urban employment as soon as it was available, why so many low-income rural parents prefer that their maturing children find urban employment rather than work on farms as wage hands or dependent tenants. With the boom in war industry, greater numbers of rural workers and their families have had an opportunity to leave the farms.

No one better recognizes these facts than the farmer who employs labor. He knows he cannot compete in the labor market with urban industry or war enterprises. Afraid of seeing the price of farm products frozen, farmers nevertheless have frequently suggested the freezing of farm labor as the only sure way of retaining needed workers. Deferment from military duty of "essential farm workers" may readily freeze many rural dwellers on farms.

The low status of the farm laborer is more obvious in some regions than in others, but present almost everywhere. In the North Atlantic area there are some peasant peoples, largely immigrants from southern and central Europe, who have been available for farm labor. Though dwindling in numbers, there are still in the Midwest some north European immigrants available as farm laborers.

In the Southwest and Pacific Coast areas, the Mexicans, Spanish-Americans, and Orientals have been the cheap sources of farm labor. In recent years, the labor supply in these regions has been increased by the



influx of farm families pushed out of the Plains by drought, out of the western cotton area by the increase of tractors. These agricultural workers old and new, are the poorest paid people in these areas, and have been characterized by low status.

In the South, the Negro farm worker has occupied the lowest position in the community, first as slave, since then as wage hand, sharecropper, or farm renter. With the passage of years, however, more southern Whites than Negroes have come to work as wage hands and farm tenants. A few years after Emancipation, many of the plantation owners shifted the slaves from farm wage hands to sharecroppers, thus transferring responsibility of production from themselves as supervisors to the Negroes. Sharecropping has been the landowners' way of keeping the Negroes and competing poorer Whites on a sort of seasonal piece-work basis. Many of low status agricultural workers in commercial crop areas throughout the country have been paid piece rates for their labor.

Over the years, even the most productive piece-rate agricultural workers have had low annual earnings. On the other hand, the employers who need laborers one-third or one-fifth of the time, or maybe only ten days in the entire year, often dismissed the question of the man's annual income by pointing out that they felt it is better to give a man work for even a part of the year than to leave him without any work at all.

Wages enter into the matter of the farm labor situation, because they determine status, and some large and small employers of labor do not be willing to see their laborers receive very much higher wages even if paid in part by government subsidy. Because of the income he receives



the clothes he wears, the food he eats, and his limited participation in the community, the farm worker's lot is envied by nobody and many people have been unwilling to do his work lest they lose status thereby.

#### C. Many Farm Workers Have Been Socially and Politically Ignored

Over the years, most of the city dwellers and many of the farm operators in some parts of the country have come to look down on the rural people who do the actual farm work. Buttressing their own sense of importance, they have often laughed at the way the lower income farm people dress, talk and act. Over the radio, on the stage, and in the movies the farm worker is the object of many a joke.

Hired farm laborers in the central and northern parts of the nation are generally of neighbors' or villagers' sons who expect to remain as hired help only temporarily. Through personal industry or inheritance these local young men may move into places of recognized position. Not so of the farm laborer in the community where employer and laborer are members of different racial or nationality groups. Here the laborer's low status is institutionalized, and he can scarcely escape his subnormal position through personal industry or accident. Such improvement, as he may make without migrating is within his own group, which will often have a common church, school and social life - commonly subject, however, to the control of the dominant group.

The farm laborer is often spoken of as a farm "hand." His employer exercises supervisory and "headwork" functions. If enough cheap "hands" are available, even a small farmer may become a supervisor of other men's work. No small part of the relatively high status of the employer of farm labor



in many areas is a corollary of the lowly status of those who work for him. The medium-sized cotton farmer, complaining of unreasonably high wages, was asked if he would work for the wage he was offering. He stated with "Who, me? Why, no, who do you think I am?"

Some of the bitterest complaints about the scarcity of farm workers have come from independent small operators in areas where farm labor has been most plentiful and cheap. The cash income of many of these non-subsistence farm employers has not increased a great deal, and they must labor for about the same price they have paid heretofore. Being the smallest employer of farm labor, seldom having a house for a worker in the least able to increase wages, he is likely to be the first employer of farm labor who complains about a shortage of farm workers. These small independent farm owners have nearly always given political support to the big landowners in their programs, through legislation and otherwise, to stabilize the labor supply.

Some of the means to stabilize the farm labor supply in heterogeneous communities include limitations upon workers as to their number of movement, their legal claim to the crops they are growing or sharing, as tenants, the exercise of the franchise, the ownership of land, and other restrictions upon their full participation in local and national affairs. Many employers feel that the continued submergence of these minorities is necessary for peace and harmony in the community.

Restrictions upon minority groups have not been limited to the South and West, or to the rural areas of the nation. The pattern of economic and social exclusion obtains even in States where the status of local minorities



is highest. Thousands of Spanish-Americans migrate to Michigan every year to do beet work, but they return to Texas as their preference of a place to live. If limitations had not been prevalent everywhere, many more Spanish-Americans, Mexicans, and Orientals would now be scattered throughout the nation.

#### D. Farm Workers Have Made Accommodations.

Many of the workers who have done the actual labor on the farms have become convinced that they cannot escape chronic dependence. Once again, sharecroppers and farm tenants have seen their savings from the years squelched up by subsequent bad ones. Back again when they came, they came to feel that there was little use to try. Their fatalism is grounded in their own experience as farm workers. Feeling helpless and defeated in terms of their own situation, most farm laborers and dependent tenants do not work nearly all the time, and then seldom with enthusiasm.

To plant and cultivate a crop, many landless cotton and tobacco growers work hard two or three months in the spring and early summer and two or three months again in the fall at harvest time. The rest of the year they have little to do. The slack work period of winter time. The long, idle winter months are well-established institutions throughout the cotton and tobacco cash crop areas, and in many self-sufficient and subsistence farm areas where low rural incomes prevail.

The relationship between the underemployed farm people and the type of cropping is in some phases a reciprocal one. Without the slaves, the South would be modified. The landless underemployed producers of the South



the South have no fixed tenure; many of them move at the end of every crop year. They raise little of their own food, make almost no repairs on the houses they live in, and feel little interest in the land they till. They are the people most often called "improvident," here where they have had the least remunerative work to do, the lowest economic and social status, the fewest rights as citizens, and the least hope of bettering themselves.

Many of their employers have long held that better conditions would spoil these people, better wages would cause them to quit work. "You'll have to change their natures before you can pay them a better wage and keep them on the job." Recent developments show that such an estimate of these rural workers is not adequate. Some people who have never received over 75 cents or a dollar a day, and this not throughout the year, do tend to stop work and "celebrate" for a few days when they first get increased wages. But many other workers stay on the job regularly. And within a short time, those who at first "could not stand prosperity" are back at work.

What happens when wages are increased for low-paid workers has already become clear in many communities. For the two great southern industries, textiles and lumber, the evidence is already in. The facts show that under the Federal wage and hour legislation the wages had increased greatly even before Pearl Harbor: in many cotton mills the hourly wage rates more than doubled; in some sawmills and planing mills they trebled. The labor of neither industry has been demoralized, nor has either industry operated shorthanded because of the irregularity of their old employees or the lack of any new employees needed.

Also, before the war came, many rural and urban employers were saying that WPA work ruined people for farm or industrial employment. But



WPA workers - millions of them - are now regularly and effectively employed on farms and in factories throughout the nation.

It is in the areas where farm workers have been most commonly termed "improvident" that urban families and rural families with relatively high incomes have often come to feel that it was beneath their dignity to do farm work. So it becomes clear that in wide sections of the country the submerged status of the people who do the actual farm work has doubtless handicapped the full use of available manpower, first by leaving the man who does the actual work without dynamic motives to make him effective as a worker; second, by rendering many of the middle- and upper-income people unwilling to do farm work lest they jeopardize their status.

## II. Tapping Under-Used Farm Labor Supplies

Involved in total war, the nation seeks programs which will release all available farm workers to maximum employment for the 1943 crop. Various factors affect the farm labor situation, often causing artificial shortages. Hopefully, some adjustments are already being made.

A few thousand rural dwellers have been transferred from areas of underemployment to other farming areas. Many employers of farm labor with little or no tradition of actual farm work are beginning to do more of it. Women are playing an increasingly important part on farms. Some employed townspersons are going out to help the farmers, and in many places urban students are being used in peak seasons.

These adjustments toward meeting the farm labor situation have been made in response to war conditions, and can be accelerated by appropriate programs.



A. A Few Thousand Rural Dwellers Have Been Transferred from Areas of Underemployment.

Under war conditions, some progress has already been made toward fuller utilization of the labor supply in the areas with the greatest plus of rural population. Hundreds of thousands of unemployed or underemployed rural people have moved off to urban industries or to non-rural areas and commute to factory employment, not infrequently leaving their farming activities largely to the women and children. Some part-time farmers have complained bitterly that dependable farm laborers are scarce and unreasonably expensive.

In recent months a program of recruitment of farm laborers has been launched. The United States Employment Service and the Farm Security Administration have helped transfer a few thousand underemployed rural dwellers from areas of underemployment. Examples of such transfers include the movement of workers from eastern Kentucky to dairy farms in Ohio, from the Wisconsin cutover to the larger dairy farms of that State, from the hill sections of Virginia to the North Atlantic States, from the Mid-South to Arizona and New Mexico and more recently to the vegetable fields of Florida. A representative of the Southern Tenants Farmers Union, who was encouraging STFU members to go and help pick the long-staple cotton crop in New Mexico and Arizona, stated that the discussion of "freezing" labor on farms in the Delta is beside the point: that farm workers - day laborers, sharecroppers and other dependent tenants - have long been "frozen" in that area and rather to be "thawed" for work elsewhere during the winter months when heretofore they have remained in the Delta, idle.

All across the South from east Texas to Virginia, in the Great Lakes cutover area, in the Spanish-American Southwest, and in smaller areas through-



out the country, there are underemployed farm workers whose time could be used elsewhere during the slack winter months and perhaps in the summer between laying-by time and harvest. To transfer this labor to other areas, however, because much of it has had little formal education, is unacquainted with the physical and social climate of other parts of the country, is largely outside organized groups, and has looked in hard times to the commissary or to the nearest crossroads store for credit.

Movement of underemployed peoples from these areas will need to be worked out in harmony with the cultural conditions in their home areas and in the areas to which they are to be transferred. If cultural backgrounds are ignored, workers may refuse to move, or be restrained from leaving, or they may be transferred to areas where they are not willing to remain, or where other farm laborers are not willing to work with them.

Employers of farm labor, too, prefer to secure the type of labor they are accustomed to using. All across the map, there are rather definite geographic and crop limits to the use of one type of farm labor or another. Mexicans and Spanish-Americans are acceptable farm workers in wide, though distinct, sections of the country. Indians may be used in one area just as soon as they are available, but not in others. Hill farmers from eastern Kentucky are wanted as farm laborers in some areas and for some types of work. So, too, with European immigrants - Italians or Poles, Hungarians or Slovenes - in the Northeast; migrant workers in the far West; Seminoles or Indians in Florida; resident white and Negro sharecroppers in the cotton and tobacco South.

The few thousand underemployed rural dwellers who have been transferred to other farming areas are finding an opportunity to increase their annual



incomes and to apply their full labor in the war effort. Thousands more can be constructively transferred if their movement is carried on in harmony with the cultural factors involved.

B. Many Farmers are More Fully Employed.

With the thinning of the traditional farm labor surplus, operators have begun to do more actual farm work. In regions where the farm owners with status have always worked on farms, there has been little change beyond the fact that such owners are working longer hours, using more of their farm machinery, getting along with less hired labor.

Throughout the country, many small farmers with a tradition of work but without resources for full employment are increasing their farm activities by the care of more livestock, the planting of larger gardens, the canning of more fruits and vegetables, and sometimes by the cultivation of additional fields made available to them when neighbors leave for urban employment, the armed forces, and farm work in other areas. Through appropriate loans and supervision, demonstrations and education, agricultural agencies can help still more of the underemployed farm families who remain on the land to grow larger crops by making fuller use of their time and available land resources.

In regions where the upper- and middle-status farmers have relied upon cheap local labor, consequently doing little manual work themselves, they are now beginning to do more farm work than ever before. The prospects are that they will do still more as local labor becomes less plentiful and more costly, and as the nation's needs for farm products increase. One large farm operator in a south Virginia county recently said: "I've been doing a little here and a little there with my workers, but the way



it looks now, I'm going to have to put in some real time on my farm next year - and so will many another farmer who has been spending all the time telling other people what to do."

### C. Women Are Playing an Increasingly Important Part on Farms.

Throughout the nation farm women have increased their production and preservation of foods. Nearly everywhere there are more gardens, more ones, more canned goods, more dried fruits.

To meet the increased labor needs, the farm women have also begun to do more outside work. Even in the rural communities where farm women with economic security and social standing have always done farm tasks, women are now operating more tractors, driving more trucks, helping more around the barn, going to the fields more often. In other areas upper- and middle-status farm women are beginning to do farm work for the first time. A Southern woman, wife of a small independent farmer said of them, "Working on the farm might hurt their feelings, but it wouldn't hurt their character."

In nearly all sections of the country, the members of the upper-income farm families had come to feel that the women of certain racial, nationality, or social groups were especially suited for some types of work. In the Connecticut Valley, Polish women have commonly worked along with the men in the fields, whereas the women of the native New England families have followed a more limited division of labor which centered their tasks around the house and barnyard, with some light field work when their men were especially hard pressed for help. In many sections of the North Atlantic States, Italian and other immigrant women have been hired to do work which native-born farmers have considered too hard for their own women



to do. In the West and Southwest, the Mexicans and Spanish-American women have been the ones who could do hard work, whereas the women of the German farmers were usually thought of as frail. However, among the foreign-born groups in the Midwest - Germans, Russians and others - the women of large farm operators often work freely in the fields.

Throughout the South, Negro women chop and pick cotton, work in the tobacco fields, and do other farm work which the upper-income white women have been considered physically unable to do. Poorer white women, however, as members of wage hand, sharecropper, and tenant families have often done the same kinds of work as the Negro women. Significantly, too, the wives of the white families who migrated to the West Coast from the drought areas have come to be considered capable of farm work.

Under wartime conditions, farm women in areas where the middle and upper-income groups are unaccustomed to doing farm work, are beginning to do some of it. From a Far West county came a report last summer that farmers could not get their beets thinned. People in the leading towns in the area volunteered to help. With townspeople working in the beet fields where hitherto only Mexican and other transient workers had been seen, a new attitude developed. Many of the growers who had assumed that it was not proper for their wives and children to do the menial work with beets, took their families into the fields along with the townspeople.

In some areas a relatively slight shift will put the women of the upper-status farm families in the fields. The only chance, however, is that a farm woman will have to work in the fields is to neglect or simplify her housekeeping.



Women from a few of the upper-status farm families are now doing farm work for the first time, and usually begin with jobs not traditionally done by the lower-income wage workers, such as driving the horses and trucks, weighing up cotton, or transporting produce to market. Members of such farm families may be willing enough to do farm work which they have not done heretofore if they can do so without losing status. A group of girls in a New England college, for example, were going out to work for a farmer. One girl was in a dilemma: she wanted to conform to her associates' expectations, but she did not want her parents in Virginia to know that she had done farm work for wages. Assured that there would be no publicity, she went along, picked apples and enjoyed it.

#### P. Some Townspeople are Coming Out to Help the Farmers.

There is a close relationship between the status of the people who work on farms and the readiness with which employed town people will leave their businesses to do farm work.

A small town in Minnesota provided a considerable number of workers for farmers throughout the 1942 busy season. They received \$5 cents an hour, which when set was above the prevailing agricultural wage. The farmers themselves made the wage recommendation. The plan worked well as an aid to farmers who needed extra workers at haying and harvest time.

In a California county, the townspeople were led by the County Tax Board to close down their businesses and help in the fruit harvest. The plan was launched with publicity in the paper and over the radio. It was agreed that liquor stores, bars, and other loitering places would be closed over the week-end. On the first day, Sunday, about 1,000 people turned out; on the second and third days hardly half that many. Most of them went to a few of the largest fruit concerns.



In a central Georgia county, the mayor of the county-seat town ordered the closing of all businesses, with instructions to the police to get the people off the streets and into the fields for one day's cotton picking. A third of the people of the town volunteered to go out and pick.

In a south Florida county, where the leading townspeople have been interested mainly in tourists, an effort was made to get people from the leading city to help plant the winter potatoes. The press headlined the possible loss of a \$2,500,000 crop. Townspeople were asked to volunteer. Registrars were stationed at each of the post offices and sub-stations in the county. The townspeople did not take the matter seriously; only a handful registered.

These four examples illustrate varying circumstances under which townspeople have been recruited for work on farms. Their locations on the map in terms of farm labor patterns are not without significance. In the Minnesota county, farm owners have traditionally done as much of their own work as possible, rarely hiring workers to do what they themselves did not have the time to do. The farmers are the relatives, and equals, of the townspeople who of their own accord went out to help them during busy seasons. In the California county the War Board put on a campaign, with the cooperation of the town's leading citizens, to get the townspeople to go out and do for large fruit growers the work that has traditionally been done by migrant laborers. In the Georgia county, the townspeople were sent to the fields of the cotton farmers. In the Florida county, the townspeople thought the press over-dramatized the situation. More than that, the urban dwellers there have had little identification with the local farm operators, almost none with the laborers who have done the actual work.



The plan used in the Minnesota county will be continued this year by mutual agreement of the farmers and the townspeople; the large fruit growers in the California county will try to get a program worked out by next harvest time that will get more townspeople in the orchards; the Georgia county's "Farm Day" will probably not be repeated unless it is again ordered by leading officials; the south Florida city workers will probably do no farm work so long as the matter is upon a purely voluntary basis.

There are of course many variations in the pattern of townspeople helping farmers. In eastern Montana, merchants cooperated for fear of losing the trade of the farmers. In a Washington county, near large shipyards the townspeople at haying time agreed to help the farmers over the weekends only to find that the farmers did not look with favor upon money making. In the California county, as shown above, the use of townspeople was limited on a Sunday at the request of the fruit growers and it proved the most popular day of the week.

#### E. In Some Places Urban Students Are Being Used in Peak Seasons

The use on farms of urban high school and college students during peak work seasons follows the same general pattern as that of the use of employed townspeople. Urban students have been used most often in areas where farm workers in normal times were relatively scarce; they have been used least in the areas where farm workers have been most plentiful, poorest paid, and have occupied a submerged position in the community.



Most of the urban high school students who worked on farms have been from the smaller towns. In some instances urban schools were closed for a week or 10 days at harvest time; in others, the school day was shortened, summer sessions were held, and other arrangements made to permit the urban students more readily available for farm work. In addition administrative adjustments have been made in several states permitting students to be absent from school to do farm work without jeopardizing their scholastic standing or the school's average daily attendance, upon which State funds are distributed.

In the areas of relatively high farm wage rates, the students have commonly worked along with the members of the farm family on an individual volunteer basis, with the school authorities readily releasing them for farm work. In the areas where farm labor has low pay and low status, the use of urban students has been limited largely to the instruction of school authorities after recommendations by public officials. If the students were members of submerged ethnic groups, they have been treated much as their parents. When they were of the employer's ethnic group, they did about the same work, but have been commonly treated with especial deference by the employers, and praised for their patriotism, to make the work acceptable to them.

Urban high school and college students have demonstrated that they will volunteer for farm work, and that with supervision they can be of great help. School authorities can render further service by offering appropriate training for student farm workers, or any appropriate recognition of the value of their labor to the nation will doubtless increase the number of student volunteers, especially in the areas where the bulk of the farm work has traditionally been done by people occupying a lowly status.



### III. In Conclusion

With the thinning of the traditional farm labor supply, there is urgent need that programs be developed for the fullest use of all available farm labor from rural and urban sources.

A number of things are already being done. Townspeople and high school and college students are being used. The underemployment of the lowest income groups - for lack of hope - and of the middle- and upper-income groups - for fear of loss of status - is being modified in the direction of a fuller use of the potential manpower of all three of these groups.

The status of the farm worker is at the heart of the farm labor situation. That is why farm women, students, and townspeople are more ready to do farm work in some areas than in others. The people who do the manual work have higher status where they work along with the operator than those where they work for him.

Cultural factors often account for the reports of farm labor shortages in counties when there has been no loss of farm crops, where there has been little or no thought yet given to the use on farms of employed townspeople and urban students, and where the majority of the farm people are wage hands, sharecroppers, and dependent tenants who traditionally have been fully employed scarcely half of the calendar year.

The members of the families of independent farm operators and employed townspeople have been most willing to do active farm work in areas where farm laborers have been scarcest and have suffered fewest economic, social, and political limitations. The members of the families of independent farm operators and employed townspeople have been least



willing to do active farm work in those areas where farm laborers have been most plentiful, have received the least pay, and have suffered the greatest economic, social, and political limitations.

By giving appropriate recognition for increased production of the farm crops needed in the war effort, public and private organizations and agencies can doubtless do much to relieve farm labor of its traditional bottom-of-the ladder status. As the war goes on, there will be need for the fuller use of all members of the farm family and of townspeople and students. Serious consideration by farmers, community leaders, and school authorities should be given to the best types of training for the fullest benefits from all of these sources of farm labor, and also the best ways of making farm work attractive to them. The press can help, too, as can also the preacher and teacher; but most helpful of all will be the increased deference of the merchant who finds the farm worker a better customer, the salesman who finds him a bigger buyer, the doctor who is called to his house more often, and especially when at long last the general public comes to understand that the man who does the actual farm work is among the nation's most important people.

The increasing need for manpower in war time means that farm wages will rise, and the status of the farm worker will be somewhat improved; he will gradually shed much of his traditional fatalism and resulting "improvidence," and so will become a more effective worker. These things are already happening; they can be speeded up by developing local, State, and Federal programs grounded upon an understanding of the cultural factors, region by region, which account for the traditional unequal distribution and under-use of the nation's rural manpower.

